Rural Women

Statistics Canada, the main source of data about sub-provincial regions in the province, does not routinely compile or publish data based on a rural/urban split. Consequently, much of the information in this statistical update was obtained by combining information from Statistics Canada's statistical profiles of individual communities. These profiles rarely provide socioeconomic data broken down by gender. Consequently, information about rural women is relatively sparse.

A definition of "rural" was required for this analysis and was determined to be[1]

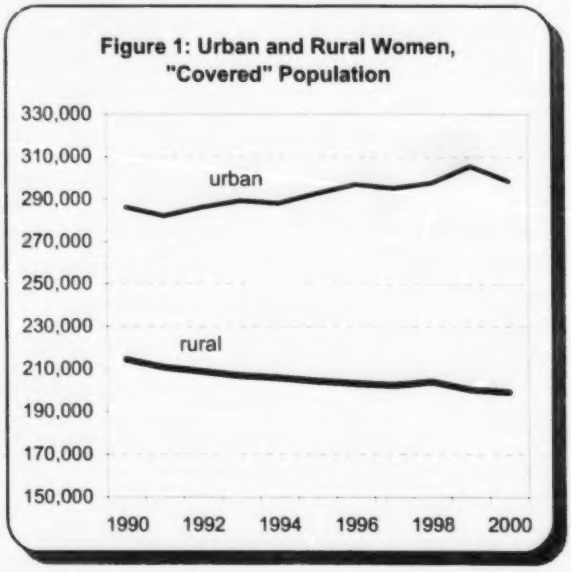
> *"all persons living in a community with a population less than 7,000 persons, excluding those in the Far North and those in the "bedroom" communities within the Regina and Saskatoon Census Metropolitan Areas".*

With this definition, approximately 406,000 persons lived in "rural" areas in 1996; 552,000 lived in "urban" areas and the remaining 31,000 lived in the Far North.

Additional data on the labour force activity of rural women are available from the Labour Force Survey[2]. The Labour Force Survey uses a different definition of "rural", namely all areas outside the four largest cities – Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, and Moose Jaw – including the bedroom communities around them. In effect, this is a broader definition of "rural" that includes the Far North but excludes those living on Reserves.

Saskatchewan Health's "covered" population can be used for more recent population data than is provided in the Census[3]. Figure 1 shows that the "covered" population of rural women is declining whereas the population of urban women is increasing. In August of 2000, Saskatchewan Health estimates the number of women in rural Saskatchewan at 199,000.

Figure 1: Urban and Rural Women, "Covered" Population



Age Groups

One of the most striking characteristics of rural women is their age distribution relative to urban women (see Figure 2). Although urban women outnumbered rural women by 43% in 1996, there were almost as many women over the age of 55 in rural Saskatchewan as there were in urban Saskatchewan.

The difference in population between rural and urban areas is almost exclusively because relatively few women under 45 years of age live in rural areas. Looked at another way, 20% of rural women were seniors in 1996 compared with 15% of urban women.

From 1991 to 1996, the population of rural women declined by 3%. Figure 3 shows that over the five years, the number of rural women increased in two particular age groups:

- those aged 35 to 54, a natural consequence of the aging of the "baby boom" generation; and
- those who are 75 years of age or older.

There was a decline in the number of children (under 15) even though the population of females in this age group increased on Reserve.

Figure 2: Age Distribution for Urban and Rural Females, 1996 Census Population

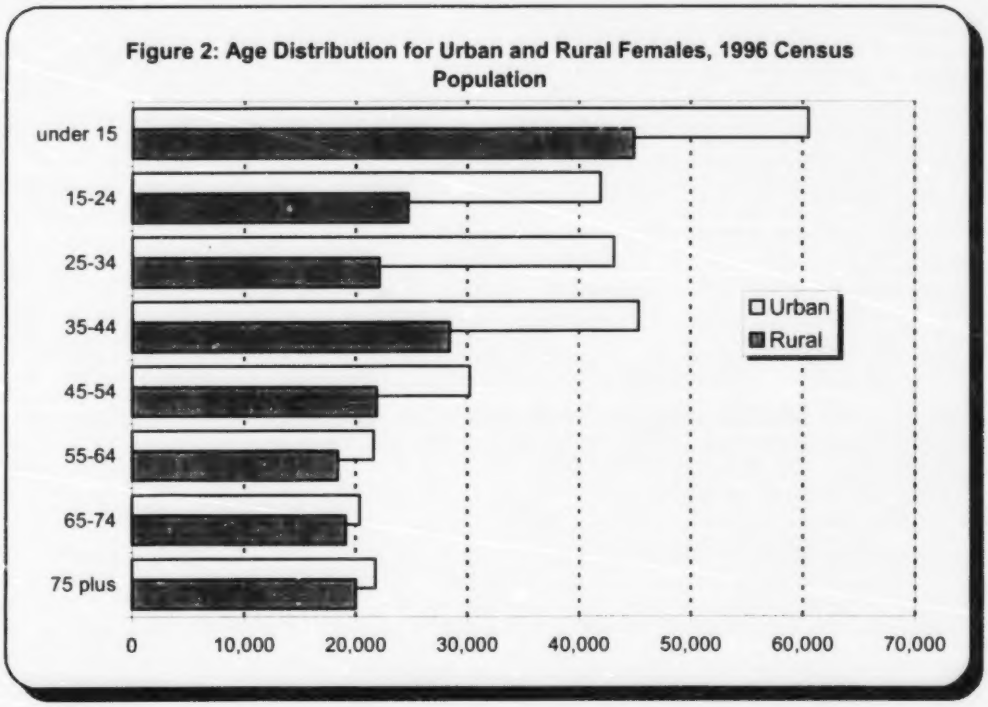
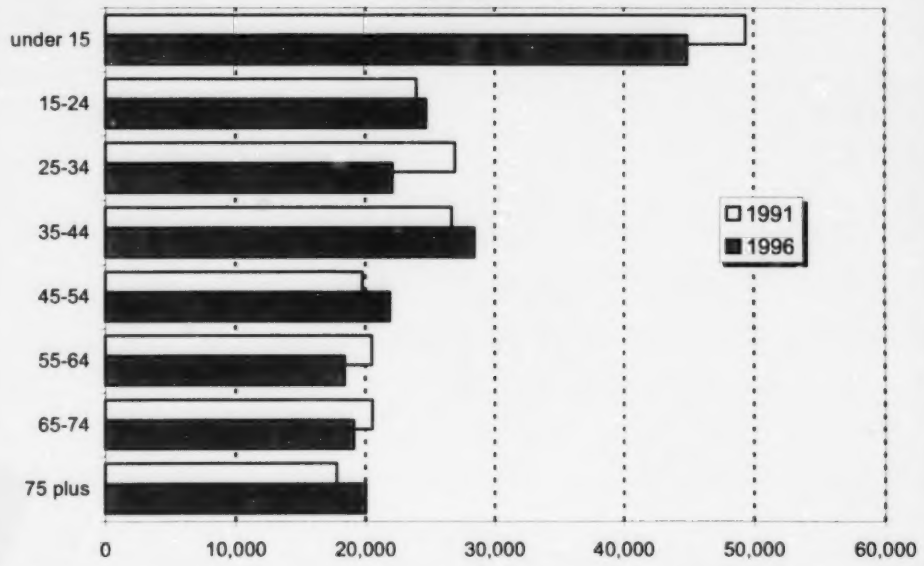


Figure 3: Age Distribution for Rural Females, 1991 and 1996 Census Populations



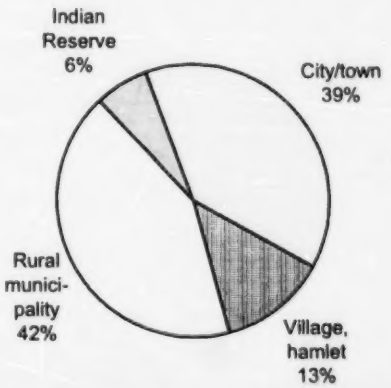
Location

In 1996, just over one-half of rural women lived in a rural community with a population of less than 7,000. Another 42% lived in rural municipalities and the remaining 6% lived on Reserve.

From 1991 to 1996, the population in rural municipalities declined by 7%; in cities/towns it declined by 1% and in villages and hamlets it declined by 5%. The on Reserve population of women increased by 26% from 1991 to 1996 although part of that increase is thought to be the result of better enumeration in the Census.

In contrast, the population of urban women increased by 2.3% over the five years.

Figure 4: Residence for Rural Females, 1996

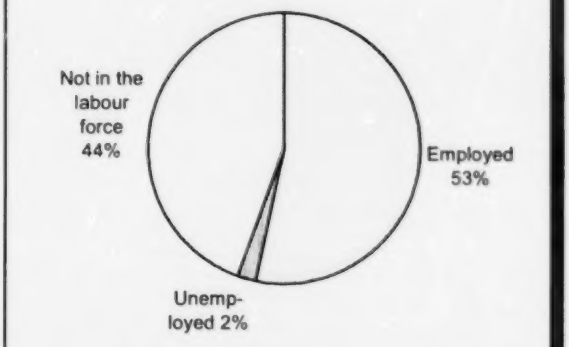


Employment

The Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey provides data on employment trends among Saskatchewan's rural women using the definition of "rural" described on page one of this statistical update: women living outside Saskatchewan's four largest cities.

Many rural women are, of course, farm operators[4]. In the 1996 Census of Agriculture, 3% of Saskatchewan's 57,000 farms were operated solely by women and 22% were jointly operated by a husband-wife couple. Even in 1995, a year when agricultural commodity prices were high, four out of 10 of women farm operators also had an off-farm job.

Figure 5: Labour Force Status, Rural Women, 2000

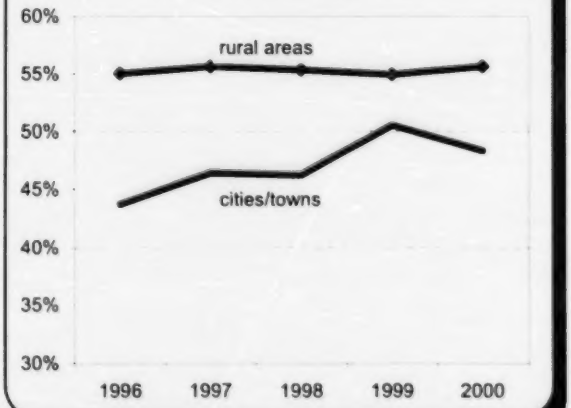


In 2000, 53% of rural women 15 years of age and older were employed. This compares to 65% of rural men and 60% of urban women. The percentage of rural women employed is higher (56% compared with 48%) in rural areas than it is in rural cities and towns (see Figure 6). In part, this is because many women living in rural cities and towns are past the age of retirement. Over one-third (36%) of employed rural women work on a part-time basis, the same proportion as urban women.

Figure 6 also shows that the employment rate among women living in rural communities is on the rise whereas the rate for women in rural areas is constant near 55%.

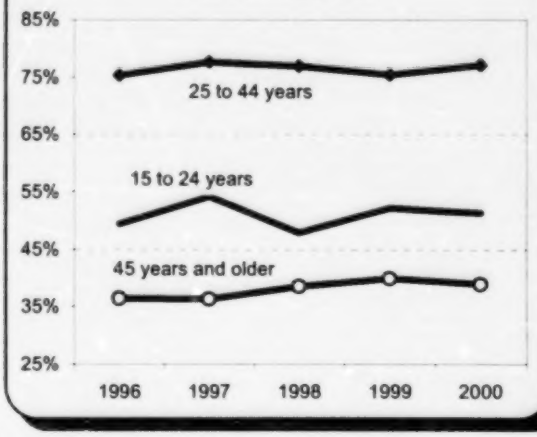
The employment rates for different age groups remained relatively constant from 1996 to 2000 as Figure 7 shows.

Figure 6: Employment Rate, Rural Women, 1996 to 2000



In contrast, the employment rates among urban women increased from 56% to 60% between 1996 and 2000. Urban women 15 to 24 years of age, in particular, experienced an increase in employment rates from 55% to 61% over the five years.

Figure 7: Employment Rate, Rural Women, 1996 to 2000

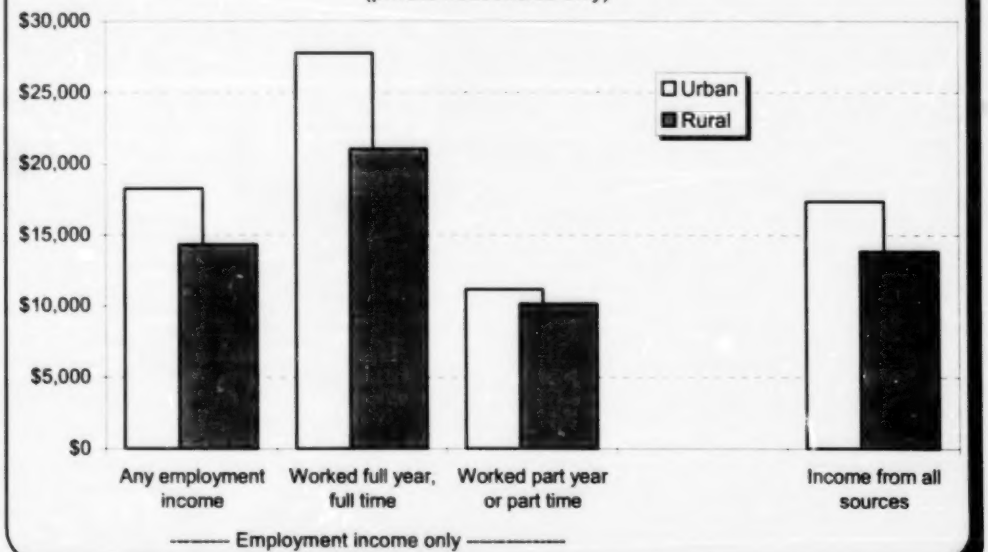


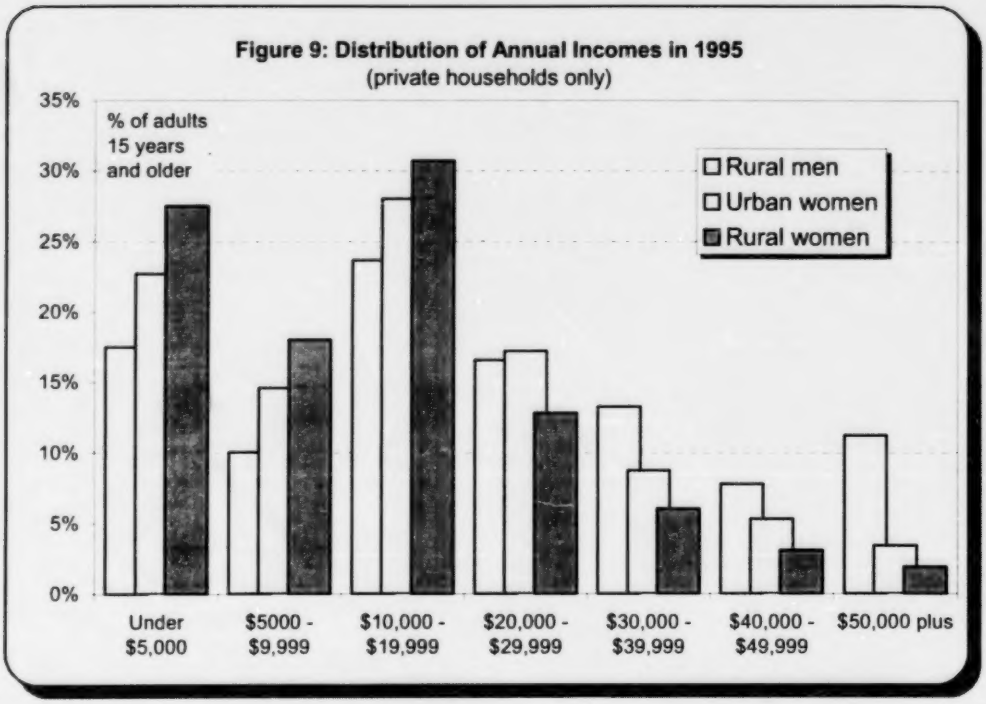
Income

In 1995, the last full year before the 1996 Census, rural women had annual gross incomes of $13,830 compared with $17,340 for urban women and $24,370 for rural men (see Figure 8).

Average income from employment was also much lower for rural women than it was for urban women, particularly among those working on a full-time, full-year basis. Rural women with full-time full-year employment earned 76% of what their

Figure 8: Average Annual Income, Saskatchewan Women, 1995
(private households only)





urban counterparts earned. There is less difference in employment earnings among those working either part-time or part of the year - rural women earned 91% of what urban women earned.

Figure 9 compares the distributions of total income in 1995 for rural and urban women and for rural men.

Rural women are more likely than both urban women and rural men to have annual 1995 incomes under $20,000. Three-quarters (76%) of rural women are in this income range compared with 65% of urban women and 51% of rural men. At the other end of the scale, 11% of rural women have incomes over $30,000 compared with 17% of urban women and 32% of rural men.

Notes

Source: The majority of these data are derived from the 1996 Statistics Canada Census. The population, age, and location variable are determined from the main Census questionnaire whereas most of the socioeconomic characteristics such as employment, education, and income are from the "long form" of the Census so they are, in effect, based on a 20% sample of households. Only persons living in private dwellings receive the long form so these statistics exclude those living in so-called "collective" dwellings including, for example, prisons, special care homes, hotels, homes for the disabled, and group homes.

1. *This results in a definition of "rural" that includes all communities except:*
   - *Regina, Saskatoon and the surrounding "bedroom" communities;*
   - *the cities of Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Yorkton, Swift Current, North Battleford, Estevan, Weyburn, and Lloydminster; and*
   - *those in the "Far North", that is the communities in the "Northern Administrative District" which corresponds to Census Division #18.*

   Note that women living on Reserves are considered as "rural" in this definition.

2. *The Labour Force Survey is a telephone survey of approximately 4,000 households in the province representing about 7,500 adults. For a variety of reasons including jurisdictional issues, costs, and response rates, the LFS survey framework excludes the population normally resident on Reserve. The survey includes the Aboriginal population living off Reserve in its survey frame.*

3. *The "covered" population is a count of the number of persons with a valid Health Registration card so this is, strictly speaking, not a population count. In particular, Saskatchewan residents who move out of province retain their health coverage for a period of three months and people who move into the province are not covered until they have lived here for three months. As well, members of the RCMP and the Armed Forces and inmates of Federal Penitentiaries are not included. The address on the card is updated whenever the person contacts the health services but is routinely updated for all residents every three years.*

4. *Statistics Canada defines a farm operation as a farm that produces at least $2,500 worth of agricultural products in a year.*

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